

Last spring, New Trier girls soccer coach Jim Burnside infamously said, “Can’t we just play soccer?”

The PepsiCo Showdown did, and an awful lot of it – 297 games and nearly 25,000 minutes of just that in 2016 alone. Imagine what that total number is since 2003 when the largest high school soccer tournament in the U.S. kicked off?



That’s a lot of soccer, and we’re adding to it in 2017.

Over time, I’ve also looked at what we could do together to help engage and educate the thousands of student athletes who play in the PepsiCo Showdown each year. As former Wheaton Academy coach Chip Huber and current Lockport coach Todd Elkei taught me: When everyone gives a little, you can make a big impact together.

Along with those 297 games and nearly 25,000 minutes of soccer the PepsiCo Showdown provided to coaches, players and schools in 2016, it also provided off-the-field opportunities through its community service arm called, “Buddy’s HELPERS.”

Competitors on the field through the PepsiCo Showdown, and buddies off the field helping others in the game of life. From women’s shelters, homeless shelters and children’s shelters to low-income families, elementary schools and so many other causes, coaches and players from countless PepsiCo Showdown schools truly were Making A Difference On AND Off The Field.

Odds are you may have seen one of the 193 stories that ran on CBS, NBC, ABC, WGN, FOX, Univision or Telemundo locally and/or nationally in 2016 focusing on PepsiCo Showdown players giving back. While many parents tell me it’s so cool to see the players involved, I always point out that the exposure is truly needed for those charities and causes.



The PepsiCo Showdown was created to give everyone - public, private, suburban and city schools - an opportunity to shine on the biggest stage together. Different backgrounds, races and cultures engaging and educating as they’re competing on the field or working together off the field to enhance the lives of those in need.

Some people can look at the PepsiCo Showdown and say we shouldn’t be doing this or that - but they’re not the PepsiCo Showdown. I’m very grateful this event is more than just goals, wins and 80 minutes. We could be just an average soccer tournament and do it pretty well. We did that for a while. But just as a coach does on the field and a teacher does in the classroom, we push – and we push hard.

Some people are OK with status quo, rather than striving for something more. That’s OK, to each their own.

But that’s just not what the PepsiCo Showdown is or will ever be.

**Joe Trost – Founder, PepsiCo Showdown**